NEBRASKA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Health & Human Services DHHS NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (NEMA) – 1300 MILITARY ROAD – LINCOLN, NE 68508-1090

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Note: Sound bites are available at:
http:// www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio/

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Wells Near Flooded Areas Need to be Tested

Lincoln—Even wells that don't appear to be flooded but are near flooded regions may need to be tested, according to Jack Daniel, administrator of the Office of Drinking Water and Environmental Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

"Even though your wellhead isn't under water, if you are near flooded areas, and especially if your well is shallow, meaning less than 50 feet deep, I recommend that you have your water tested to be sure it's safe," Daniel said.

Underground seepage can occur, and floodwaters can impact a domestic well without any evidence of it aboveground.

"If your water tastes different or if it looks cloudy, don't drink it," Daniel said. "Get it tested."

To have your water tested, you can order kits from the Nebraska Public Health Environmental Laboratory by calling (402) 471-3935. Request a Colilert test kit ($10) which can test for Coliform and E.coli. Homeowners need to collect the sample and return it to the lab within 30 hours of sample collection.

Protect Private Wells
Daniel reiterated that private water well owners in soon-to-be-flooded areas should take precautions to prevent their drinking water from being contaminated.

Well owners should take the following steps if they believe their well will be impacted:

- Before taking the well out of service, store a supply of clean water;
- Disconnect the power supply for the well. Consult a Nebraska-licensed well driller or pump installer if help is needed;
- Perform actions necessary to make the well water-tight, including removing the well vent and replacing it with a water-tight plug, and sealing any visible joint openings with water-tight caulking or equivalent material;
- Cover the top of the well with a heavy-duty plastic trash bag or equivalent protective covering and tightly secure it, making it as water-tight as possible to keep out dirt, debris and contaminants.

Sealing won't eliminate the need for testing and possible disinfection, but it will provide the best chance for the well to come on-line quickly and minimize repair costs and maintenance.

Information regarding disinfection of wells and recovery from flooding can be found at http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/puh/enh/PlanRecoverDisaster.pdf

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